

# **Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

**2023 – 2036**

**Post Examination Consultation Version**

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## Foreword

### ***Building a Better Beautiful Belford***

*Everything in life changes and evolves over time, be it slowly incrementally and comfortably or suddenly, comprehensively and threateningly. Many people are uncomfortable with change, fearing it will unacceptably alter the familiar character of their surroundings and their quality of life, instinctively favouring the status quo.*

*Planning is the art of anticipating and managing change in an appropriate manner that acknowledges the character and heritage of a place while at the same time embracing the current and future needs of a community. We should draw from the past to inform the present in order to build with confidence for the future.*

*The Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan sets out the Parish Council's hopes for the Parish and its environs and is intended to be a tool to stimulate good design and guide and manage: the function, location, form, scale, appearance, sustainability and impact on the community and on current and future infrastructure of new development within the Parish.*

*Between us we can build a better more beautiful Belford by helping to provide the best local planning policies to guide future development thereby improving the quality and character of the Parish. Together we can make Belford a people first Parish where we can enjoy living working and playing in a healthy, happy, attractive, safe community.*

*I would like to thank members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for their active involvement in shaping the Plan, our planning consultant Jenny Ludman who has supported us in drafting the Plan and providing the evidence necessary to justify the policies included in the Plan, and planning officers at the County Council's Neighbourhood Planning Team who have helped to guide us through the complex process of preparing a neighbourhood plan.*

Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson  
Chair, Belford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced new powers to allow local communities to shape development in their areas by preparing a neighbourhood development plan. This is the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) and policies in this Plan will be used to determine planning applications in the Belford Neighbourhood Area, alongside other relevant policies in the development plan.

1.2 Neighbourhood plans may only be prepared in areas that have been formally designated by the Local Planning Authority. The Belford Neighbourhood Area was originally designated by Northumberland County Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2015. At that time the Neighbourhood Area comprised the civil parishes of Belford and Middleton, along with Warenton Ward which together, for the purposes of local government administration, were formally organised and managed as Belford with Middleton Parish Council. However, following a local parish boundary review in 2020, the geographic extent of Belford civil parish was extended to include the parish of Easington. A modified Belford Neighbourhood Area was subsequently designated by the County Council on 20 May 2021 to replace the previous designation. This covers the whole of the new civil parish of Belford. Belford Parish Council is identified as the qualifying body for neighbourhood planning purposes. No other neighbourhood area is designated that includes any part of the Belford Neighbourhood Area and the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan is the only neighbourhood development plan proposed in the designated area. The Belford Neighbourhood Area is shown on the map below at Figure 1.

1.3 The Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by a Steering Group comprising members of Belford Parish Council and other residents in the Neighbourhood Area. Support has been provided by Northumberland County Council's Neighbourhood Planning Team and other stakeholders, and the group have commissioned Ludman Planning Ltd, chartered planning consultants, to support the technical aspects of writing the Plan.



**Figure 1.** Belford Neighbourhood Area



## **Why have a Plan for Belford?**



1.4 The Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan creates locally specific planning policies which will provide a clear indication as to what kind of development will be supported and where in the Neighbourhood Area, and what kind of development will not. It will give spatial clarity for development proposals by defining a settlement boundary for Belford village. This planning policy tool will help in distinguishing between the local land-use planning policy framework to be applied to proposals within the built-up parts of Belford village, and that which will be applied to proposals in the countryside beyond the settlement boundary.

## **What evidence have we used to prepare the Plan?**

1.5 The community have been involved through various consultation and engagement activities to help the Parish Council understand the issues that are important to them. The main issues identified by the local community were to:

- improve and re-vitalise the village centre;
- preserve and enhance the special qualities of the Belford Conservation Area;
- support high quality and sustainable design in the Neighbourhood Area;
- have enough of the right type of housing for young families to live in the area and for older people to remain in the area;
- retain and improve local community facilities and valued green spaces in Belford;
- boost the local economy, whilst ensuring that this does not impact negatively on surrounding residential properties;
- support local business and promote tourism

1.6 Understanding the issues that are important to the local community has helped in creating a set of draft planning policies that seek to ensure that future development in the Neighbourhood Area is managed in a way that reflects the views of the local community. Issues raised which were not land-use planning issues have been included in a series of 'Community Projects' described briefly in Section 5 of the Plan. These will be taken forward by the Parish Council in conjunction with partner organisations where necessary.

1.7 Evidence used by the Parish Council in support of the draft Plan is listed in Appendix A. This includes various reports prepared by the Parish Council in support of specific policies; and those produced recently by Northumberland County Council to support the Northumberland Local Plan. That evidence can be found on the County Council's website and includes detailed information in relation to landscape character, housing requirements, recreational open space and the local economy.

**What consultation has taken place so far?**

1.8 Throughout the plan preparation process, the Steering Group has engaged with the local community, through consultation events, and newsletters, and has consulted and engaged with local residents, local businesses, major landowners and other local groups and organisations. Specific consultations have taken place on key issues, such as settlement boundaries, housing, and the local economy. The draft plan was amended to take account of the comments received during consultation. A consultation statement has been prepared which sets out how engagement has informed the preparation of the plan.

## **2. Neighbourhood Plans: The ‘Basic Conditions’**

2.1 Neighbourhood plans create planning policies that must be used in making decisions on planning applications. For this reason, neighbourhood plans must be supported by appropriate evidence that justifies the introduction of policies to manage development; and they must pass a series of tests prescribed in legislation before they may formally be brought into force by the Local Planning Authority. These tests are collectively known as ‘the basic conditions’. The purpose of independent examination is to provide an independent opinion on whether the Plan meets the relevant tests. The basic conditions require that neighbourhood plans should not be brought into force unless the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that:

- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood development plan;
- the making of the neighbourhood development plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- the making of the neighbourhood development plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
- the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, European Union obligations; and
- The making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations).

2.2 The Parish Council must reach a conclusion that confirms they believe the Plan meets the basic conditions when the Plan is submitted to the County Council for independent examination. How the Plan meets these requirements will be set out in detail in a Basic Conditions Statement which will be submitted to the County Council alongside the Plan in due course. The Basic Conditions Statement will be prepared following completion of consultation on the draft Plan and following consideration by the Parish Council of any written representations made during the consultation period. The following section sets out briefly the main considerations relevant in assessing whether the Plan meets the basic conditions.

### **General Conformity with Strategic Policies in the Development Plan**

2.3 The County Council adopted the Northumberland Local Plan in March 2022. The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with strategic policies contained in the Northumberland Local Plan.

2.4 Northumberland County Council has provided the Parish Council with details of the relevant strategic planning policies for the area and the Basic Conditions Statement will



provide an assessment of the extent to which the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with those policies.

2.5 The Northumberland Local Plan defines settlement boundaries for a number of towns and villages that are not in the process of producing a neighbourhood plan other than where the relevant parish council has confirmed that they do not wish to have settlement boundaries. Belford Parish Council confirmed to the County Council that it is continuing with the preparation of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan, and that the definition of a settlement boundary for Belford village will be made through this Neighbourhood Plan.

2.6 Several evidence-based reports were commissioned to assist with the production of the Northumberland Local Plan. Some of these evidence-based reports have also been used to inform the Belford Neighbourhood Plan. A full list of the evidence used to support the Neighbourhood Plan is provided in Appendix A.

### **Having Regard to National Planning Policy and Guidance**

2.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021) and National Planning Practice Guidance provide the most up to date planning policy and advice from Central Government. In preparing the Neighbourhood Plan the Parish Council has had regard to national policy and guidance to ensure the Plan will meet the basic conditions.

### **Achieving Sustainable Development**

2.8 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development is widely recognised, including through definitions provided in NPPF. In general terms this means taking decisions that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In order to achieve sustainable development NPPF identifies three overarching objectives for the planning system which are independent but need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. NPPF defines and describes the purpose of an **economic** objective, a **social** objective and an **environmental** objective. Achieving these objectives will contribute to the creation of sustainable development. The expectation set out in NPPF is that opportunities should be taken through plan-making and decision taking to secure net gains across all three of these different overarching objectives.

2.9 The promotion of, and support for, sustainable development is at the heart of community aspirations in Belford. This is reflected in the planning policies and in the Community Projects contained in the Plan. Support for sustainable development is also reflected in the vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Area. The vision and objectives for the area are set out later in the Plan.

### **European Union Obligations**

2.10 Various European Union (EU) Directives and associated European legislation has been transferred into UK legislation to seek to ensure that the environmental and other effects of introducing policies in plans, including neighbourhood plans, are properly understood before those plans are brought into force. It is therefore necessary to consider whether a neighbourhood plan would be likely to result in significant effects on the environment, on important plant and animal species and habitats, and on human rights, amongst other things. Conclusions on these matters will be described in detail in the Basic Conditions Statement.

2.11 In order to meet EU obligations there are particular requirements that must be considered in relation to environmental effects and the effect policies may have on protected species and habitats. The processes to be followed in meeting these obligations are prescribed in UK legislation. In simple terms, the first stage requires a judgement from a relevant competent local authority about whether implementation of the policies in the Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This process is known as 'screening'. Screening opinions have been provided by Northumberland County Council. These confirm that the Plan is likely to result in significant effects on the environment, particularly on protected species and on internationally designated habitats along the north Northumberland coast.

2.12 As a result of these conclusions an 'Appropriate Assessment' under the Habitats Regulations has been completed. This triggers the need for further environmental assessment known as 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' (SEA) which must be completed in accordance with The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. That assessment results in the preparation of an 'Environmental Report' which sets out conclusions on the significance of any anticipated environmental effects associated with implementation of the Plan. The purpose of these forms of assessment is ultimately to minimize, mitigate or compensate for any significant environmental effects judged as being likely to arise through implementation of the Plan by, where necessary, making appropriate modifications to policies to limit or manage their environmental effects. An Environmental Report has been prepared for the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan setting out the conclusions of the assessment.

2.13 The relevant Regulations require consultation on the Environmental Report. That Report is now published alongside this Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Comments are invited through this current consultation on the conclusions of the environmental assessment as set out in the Environmental Report.

### **Conformity with the Habitats Regulations**

2.14 The County Ecologist confirmed through a screening opinion under the Habitats Regulations that policies in the Plan would be likely to have a significant impact on European protected species and designated habitats. Accordingly, an Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken to meet the requirements of those Regulations and to ensure the Plan will meet the 'Basic Conditions'. This assessment has resulted in the need for a policy to be included in the Plan that ensures mitigation is secured to address the impacts arising from new residential development and tourist accommodation on protected species and habitats in European designated sites along the north Northumberland coast (Policy 15); and a policy to prevent further deterioration in water quality in watercourses that discharge into or close to European protected sites (Policy 16).

### **3. Belford: A Brief History and Portrait of the Parish**

#### Historic Context

3.1 Belford is a roadside village which straddles the historic route of the Great North Road midway between Berwick and Alnwick at the junction with the Wooler road where it crosses Belford Burn. Historically there are references to Belford dating from 1639, but the village developed rapidly in the early 18th Century under the patronage of a new landlord Abraham Dixon of Newcastle.

#### Built Form

3.2 Belford developed around the point where the Great North Road deviates from the course of Belford Burn to make the ascent to high ground to the east of the substantial whinstone outcrop of Chapel Crag. This spot became a convenient coaching halt where horses could be changed, and travellers could rest and be refreshed. The coach traffic stimulated the development of inns, public houses and shops catering to the needs of travellers and the local population.

3.3 In 1736 the Squire procured a licence to hold a weekly market and spring and summer Fairs. The gathering space in front of the Blue Bell Inn evolved into Market Place, which now forms the village centre. From here Belford grew, primarily to the south creating High Street, and to the West in the direction of Wooler. Most of the buildings on High Street date from the mid-18th Century. They take the form of two and three storey modest provincial Pattern Book Georgian houses and shops in continuous terraces rising directly from the pavement.

3.4 The street facades are generally constructed from dressed local sandstone or whinstone rubble walling with vertically sliding sash windows and centre ridge roofs, generally finished in blue grey slate or terracotta pan tiles. The whinstone rubble facades are sometimes faced with colour washed harling, a heavily textured render coating of lime mortar and crushed stone aggregate. This simple aesthetic of classically inspired Georgian proportions, similarity of scale; uniform use of sash windows and a limited palette of materials create a unified architectural character to the village centre.

3.5 To the east of High Street is Grade I Listed Belford Hall: an 18th Century neo-classical Country House set within a landscaped Park. The renowned Palladian architect James Paine designed the central villa of the Hall in 1754 for Abraham Dixon whose estate included the whole of Belford and surrounding farmland. The later Regency wings of the Hall were designed by Newcastle architect John Dobson who also designed several buildings in High Street including the remodelling of the Parish Church of St Mary which terminates the vista along High Street to the north.

3.6 The High Street and Belford Park form the Belford Conservation Area incorporating several Listed Buildings of architectural significance. The Conservation Area is defined as an area of architectural and historic interest, which is to be conserved and enhanced. Vernacular cottages of one and two storeys, built from rubble sandstone and whinstone, border West Street, the route to Wooler, which crosses the Belford Burn to the south of the Market Square. The buildings on West Street are generally of a smaller scale with terraces of cottages on the north set well back from the carriageway creating a broad public green. The buildings to the north of the carriageway have an independent access drive along their frontage running parallel to West Street.

3.7 The majority of buildings in the centre of Belford date from an era before motor vehicles and few properties have provision for parking. Some High Street properties have rear access from a series of secondary lanes, but most residents and visitors rely on informal kerbside parking along the highway.

3.8 The growth of Belford has been constrained to the north by the steeply sloping topography of Chapel crag and to the east by Belford Park. Consequently, the village has expanded to the west of High Street and to the south of the West Street. Development in this area is predominately low-density semi-detached single and two storey family houses and social housing built in various periods and styles since the 1930s in a typical suburban manner. There is a small neighbourhood of detached and semi-detached private family houses built over a similar period on the high ground to the north of St Mary's Church and west of the Great North Road.

### Commerce

3.9 Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries commerce in Belford evolved to serve the needs of the Royal Mail coach service, its passengers, village residents and the surrounding farming community. The coming of the railway in 1847 and its routing over a mile to the east meant that the village lost the custom of the Royal Mail and its lucrative passenger trade. However, vehicular traffic on the Great North Road continued to pass through the centre of Belford.

3.10 As the number and speed of vehicles on the A1 increased, the form and construction of the carriageway and village buildings were altered to meet the functional needs of traffic. Consequently, the character of the High Street deteriorated into that of a trunk road for through traffic rather than a village High Street serving the needs of the community. Eventually the disruption to village life caused by the increased road traffic stimulated the villagers demand for a bypass. In 1983 the Belford Bypass was opened, routing the A1 to the east of the village. The A1 in Northumberland forms part of the Strategic Road Network (~~SRN~~)

and, as such, is the responsibility of National Highways, the government company which plans, designs, builds, operates and maintains England's motorways and major A roads.

3.11 While the opening of the bypass freed the village from the negative aspects of through traffic, it also reduced its visibility and public awareness and the business opportunities offered by its previous exposure. Belford's traditional role as a neighbourhood centre serving the day-to-day requirements of villagers and the surrounding farming community with a mix of small shops declined with the growth of car ownership and the opportunity for residents to travel farther afield to the larger shops and superior choice of goods in Alnwick and Berwick. Gradually, as a result of loss of custom, the small village shops closed, the character and liveliness of the High Street declined as fewer people went about their daily shopping.

3.12 Currently the food and household shopping needs of the local population is served by a single Co Op convenience store located in West Street at the centre of the village and the Sunnyhills Farm Shop and bistro at the southern entrance to the village. On High Street are a Dental Practice, Newsagent, the Well House Coffee Shop, the Belford Community charity shop, ladies' hairdressers, beauty salon and a hardware store. In Church Street there is an Art Print Studio and on West Street is the Pharmacy and a Fish and Chip Shop. In Croft Way off the southern end of High Street is the Belford Medical Practice and pharmacy. On West Street the old Parish Workhouse has been extended and altered into a modern social day care centre and the home of Bell View a charity providing a range of care services to the wider local community.

3.13 The Blue Bell, the original coaching inn on Market Place, is the major village public house with bars a dining room and overnight accommodation. There are two further pubs also providing bar meals: The Black Swan on Church Street; and The Salmon Inn on High Street. In common with the rest of North Northumberland, Belford benefits from tourism. There are many bed and breakfast establishments and holiday cottages within the Parish. In the village there are two caravan and camping sites: The Blue Bell Farm Caravan Park off West Street; and South Meadows Caravan Park at the southern entrance into the village.

### Industry and Employment

3.14 Farming is a major activity and employer in the region. Local agriculture is dominated by livestock production with two-thirds of farmland devoted to rough grazing for cattle and sheep. The remainder is mainly cereals and mixed farming. To supplement their income many farmers have diversified into tourism by converting redundant farm buildings into holiday accommodation.

3.15 To the East of Belford with access off the A1 Belford Bypass is Belford Industrial Estate providing a range of modern purpose-built units for a mix of light industrial users. A major



tenant is Coastal Grains one of the largest co-operative grain drying and storage facilities in the country with 120 members situated throughout Northumberland Durham and the Scottish Borders. The large grain storage silos and conveyor systems are an imposing landmark on the A1 at the southern entrance into Belford.

3.16 Adjacent to the Industrial Estate is the decommissioned Belford Station and North East Mainline Railway. There is potential for a rail link directly into the Industrial site and the Parish Council will support such an initiative.

3.17 To the south of Belford off South Street is Gilbert Birdsall Ltd, a ready-mix concrete and aggregate supplier and building and civil engineering groundwork's contractor. In the centre of Belford off West Street is Border Consultants (Forestry) Ltd. Northeast of Belford off Cragmill Road is Cemex Cragmill Quarry which supplies whinstone aggregate and building materials. Located in the hamlet of Detchant northwest of Belford is Bedmax, a manufacturer and supplier of equine bedding produced from locally grown timber.

#### The Future for Belford

3.18 Any authority that resists change will eventually stagnate and endanger the environment and prosperity of the community it is striving to protect. Belford Parish Council will take a proactive role in encouraging and supporting appropriate residential, business and commercial development within the Parish and this is the rationale behind preparing the Neighbourhood Plan which seeks to support sustainable development and thereby contribute positively to meeting the principal aim of the planning system.

3.19 The Parish Council supports the upgrading of the A1 carriageway and the reopening of Belford Railway Station to provide a passenger rail link to Newcastle. The Parish Council will actively engage with Northumberland County Council to pursue both projects and National Highways in relation to any proposals with an influence upon the A1. The Council also wishes to encourage the regeneration and beautification of the High Street Conservation Area by: reducing vehicle speed through the village; encouraging building owners to refurbish their individual properties in a co-ordinated and appropriate manner that will enhance the character, appearance and reputation of the village; increasing walkability and bicycle use; and encouraging a high standard of civic design and public landscape which will make Belford a more pleasant, convenient and enjoyable place in which to live and visit. All these aims will be pursued through the planning policies and Community Projects set out in the Plan.

## 4. The Vision and Objectives for Belford Neighbourhood Area

4.1 The Vision for the Neighbourhood Area is set out below:

**By 2036 Belford will be a thriving, economically diverse and attractive rural hub serving the needs of local residents, businesses and visitors, growing its role as a springboard to the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Northumberland National Park as well as wider rural destinations.**

4.2 In order to deliver this Vision the Parish Council has identified five Objectives which are set out below:

### OBJECTIVE 1: HOUSING

**To support the development of well-located, well-designed new housing in Belford to sustain a balanced and diverse population, and to ensure that we retain and enhance community facilities to support that population.**

4.3 Belford Parish has a population of 1516 people (at 2011 census). Most of the population in the Neighbourhood Area is concentrated within the settlement of Belford. The Parish also has number of smaller hamlets including Ross, Elwick, Low Middleton, Middleton, Detchant, Easington and Warren Mill. There are several other isolated dwellings and farmsteads in the countryside within the Parish.

4.4 Based on the 2011 census data 19.9% of dwellings in the Parish were unoccupied at that time. A small proportion of housing in any area will always be unoccupied as a result of people moving, and this is essential to allow the housing market to function properly in terms of supply and demand. It would normally be expected that around 5% of housing would be empty at any one time. However, in areas where census data shows a comparatively high level of unoccupied dwellings this can point towards other explanations being required.

4.5 In the case of locations within or close to the north Northumberland coast, which is a popular holiday destination, it is likely that empty dwellings will include second homes and holiday accommodation. Where the proportion of empty dwellings in a parish exceeds 20% it is widely considered that this begins to point towards an imbalance in the housing stock which is likely to contain significant numbers of second homes and holiday accommodation. A diminishing resident population associated with such changes can impact the viability of local businesses, community services and facilities. Belford is now combined with the former Middleton and Easington parishes (the NP area was amended in April 2021 to reflect that), which were both well over the 20% threshold referred to according to the Census 2011 data

on households with no permanent residents (44.5% Easington / 37.9% Middleton), and for which the Northumberland Local Plan Policy HOU10 primary occupancy restrictions apply. It remains to be seen what the 2021 Census data for households with no permanent residents shows and whether it will hit that 20% threshold taking Belford within the requirements of NLP Policy HOU10.

4.6 The Northumberland Local Plan sets out planning policies that establish the requirement for additional housing across Northumberland during the period from April 2016 until April 2036. It also identifies minimum housing requirements for all designated neighbourhood areas. The requirement for Belford is a minimum of 120 dwellings over the 20-year Northumberland Local Plan period. The Neighbourhood Plan must not plan to deliver less than the requirement set out in the Local Plan.

4.7 A study commissioned by Bell View into the needs of older people and the assets that support older people in the catchment area of the Bell View Centre resulted in the publication of a report: 'Bell View: Strengths and Needs analysis of catchment area (October 2017)'. This report provides details from survey data and general commentary on the needs of older people. It concludes that transport and the ability to physically access services present the greatest barriers. The availability of housing that meets the needs of older people is also highlighted as a concern of a significant number of people who contributed to the surveys on which the report's conclusions are based.

4.8 A subsequent report commissioned by Bell View looked specifically at housing needs of older people in the Belford area (Bell View Housing Needs Study, 2019). While the study recognised that data collected was unlikely to provide a statistically representative sample of the whole target population (over-65s), it did provide important current market research data on older household's needs. In particular, the study identified a demand for two-bedroom bungalows as the preferred type of housing across all tenures.

4.9 The Bell View Housing Needs Study concluded that accessibility, affordability, security and access to local services and amenities are key priorities for older households when considering the location of housing to meet their needs. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to recognise and support opportunities that may be presented to address the housing needs of older people through the provision of affordable and community-led housing schemes to meet local needs, and where feasible, to support the provision of accessible and adaptable housing for older people.

4.10 The Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan defines a settlement boundary for Belford to distinguish between the built-up area of Belford village and the countryside beyond for the purpose of managing future development in accordance with an established planning policy framework. The settlement boundary has been defined to accommodate most existing

planning permissions for housing development which will help to ensure that sufficient land is available to deliver the identified housing requirement in a sustainable way over the Plan period. More information on this is contained in the settlement boundary background report which forms part of the evidence base for the Plan.

4.11 The Plan supports new housing within Belford village; affordable housing by exception in the countryside adjoining Belford; on isolated sites by reference to specific exceptional circumstances; and allows for single dwellings to be built in the hamlets and at farm steadings. Collectively, this support for new housing is considered by the Parish Council to be important in maintaining a sustainable community across the Parish as a whole.

## **OBJECTIVE 2: COMMUNITY LIFE**

**To support our existing community facilities and to support the growth of more services and facilities in Belford. We will protect our special green spaces and recreational areas that are valued by the local community.**

4.12 Belford village is designated as 'Service Centre' the Northumberland Local Plan. The expectation through this designation within the settlement hierarchy in terms of supporting future development is that Belford will accommodate employment, housing and services that maintain and strengthen its role.

4.13 Belford village has several services and facilities that are highly valued by the community. These have been identified through an audit of facilities, and through community consultation, and these are listed in a specific policy in the Plan that seeks to protect those facilities. Within the village there is a school; a number of community facilities including shops, post office and play areas; a Fire Station; ambulance station; medical facilities at Belford Medical Practice and The Dental Room; St Mary's Church; and the Bell View Day Care Centre which contains a range of meeting rooms and hosts a mix of activities primarily aimed at older people but including provision for young people.

4.14 Belford has several valued green spaces within the Neighbourhood Area which are considered worthy of designation as Local Green Spaces. Justification for these designations, all of which meet the requirements established in national planning policy and guidance, is set out in the report 'Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan: Protecting Open Space Background Report' (March 2021).

## **OBJECTIVE 3: THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

**To support the retention of a vibrant, attractive and enterprising retail centre in Belford, and support the wider local economy by supporting existing businesses to grow, and providing a positive environment for the creation of new businesses.**

4.15 The small businesses, shops and facilities in Belford all contribute to the local economy, provide employment opportunities and offer valuable services to the local community and to visitors. Belford Industrial Estate, located immediately to the east of the A1, provides valuable local employment. There are several other large businesses in the countryside around Belford.

4.16 The Plan looks to introduce policies that will help in retaining and supporting the growth of these local businesses, and it supports the creation of new businesses. The Plan also recognises that the planning system allows for various changes of use to buildings without the need for planning permission. The Parish Council is keen to ensure that steps are taken to protect existing services and facilities, as far as possible, and to prevent their loss; and to support the creation of new services and facilities. Accordingly, planning policies have been included in the Plan to address this matter, particularly where changes to residential use are proposed.

4.17 The Neighbourhood Area is a popular holiday destination and provides access to beautiful parts of the Northumberland coast and countryside for day visitors. Tourism is supported by a range of facilities and activities that offer important local employment opportunities. There are a number of private holiday homes in the area and several businesses that provide tourist accommodation. The Plan encourages the retention and provision of facilities that support sustainable tourism.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL**

**To promote and encourage investment and improvement in active travel routes which enable walking and cycling within the village with links to the coast and hills; and to support investment in and improvement of important public transport connections which enable sustainable travel to other areas.**

4.18 There are opportunities to improve public rights of way and potentially cycle ways, to better connect the settlements to the surrounding countryside and coast. The Parish has a range of walking and cycling routes. Many walking groups and cyclists pass through the area, sometimes taking advantage of local facilities. However, balancing the activities on public rights of way and tracks can sometimes come into conflict with other rural activities and paths need to be clearly waymarked and maintained. The Parish Council intends to pursue long term regular maintenance and repair of rights of way as a community project.

4.19 The area could be made more accessible by public transport, walking and cycling thereby reducing the need to travel for both people and goods. More off-road cycle ways, bridleways and paths would help. There is passion in the community to support the creation of a new underpass for walkers and cyclists that would go under the A1 and improve safer

access to the coast. Belford Rail Station closed in 1968 and there is spirit amongst the community and rail-user groups to explore re-opening the station. There is agreement to take this forward as a community project. The A1 in Northumberland forms part of the Strategic Road Network and is the responsibility of National Highways. National Highways currently have no funding to contribute to any such proposals and, equally, would be unable to accept any liability regarding maintenance. Any such infrastructure would need to be the responsibility of Northumberland County Council. Extensive liaison and agreement would be required with National Highways, not only in relation to technical matters but also liability and contributions towards traffic management associated with inspection, maintenance et cetera.

#### **OBJECTIVE 5: THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

**To support the protection and sensitive management of the Belford Conservation Area to maintain its special interest; and to protect our most valued places through encouraging high-quality design in new development and protecting and enhancing the intrinsic character and beauty of our valued landscapes and green spaces.**

4.20 There are a number of listed buildings and places of historic interest within the Neighbourhood Area. Belford village has a Conservation Area within which are a number of listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets. There is currently no Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Belford. A policy is proposed in the Plan which seeks to ensure that the special qualities of the Conservation Area are recognised and protected through the development management process. In addition, there are a number of areas scheduled for their heritage value to the north of the village, and these are shown on the Policies Map.

4.21 Part of the Neighbourhood Area lies in the Northumberland Heritage Coast, as well as within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are also a number of areas protected through national and international designations for their ecological value in the Neighbourhood Area. These areas consist of the Bamburgh Coast and Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the Lindisfarne SSSI, the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA), the Northumberland Marine SPA, the Lindisfarne Ramsar site (designated under the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance), the North Northumberland Dunes Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast SAC.

4.22 The landscape around Belford is highly valued by the local community. The Berwick-upon-Tweed Local Plan (1999) designated the area to the west of Belford village known as the Kyloe Hills and Glendale, as being of High Landscape Value. The area to the east was designated as of Intermediate Landscape Value. This Berwick-upon-Tweed Local Plan was superseded by the Northumberland Local Plan on 31st March 2022. To the east of Belford is an area designated in that Local Plan as being of Intermediate Landscape Value. The Plan will



look to create policies, based on more recent evidence and landscape assessments that recognise the importance of these landscapes in decision making on development proposals.

4.23 Good design should reflect or respect the local vernacular and contribute to a 'sense of place' particularly within the Conservation Area, where there is a high concentration of listed buildings. Part of good design is using locally relevant materials which the Plan seeks to support. In addition, there is support for more sustainable design to be incorporated into development, to reduce the carbon footprint of new development. The Plan will create policies that support good design, including innovative solutions where appropriate; and will support sustainability features that reduce the wider environmental impacts of new development.

## 5. The Planning Policies

5.1 This section of the Neighbourhood Plan sets out the land-use planning policies against which new development in the Parish must be judged. These policies will form part of the statutory development plan once they are brought into force. Planning legislation and national planning policy requires that decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with relevant policies in the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is this legislation that gives the Neighbourhood Plan real strength in the decision-making process.

5.2 The Neighbourhood Plan should be read as a whole. Development proposals should be assessed against all policies in the Plan that may be relevant to the particular development being proposed and against any other up-to-date relevant policies elsewhere in the development plan.

5.3 Explanatory text, which describes and explains the purpose of the policy and any relevant evidence that supports the policy, is provided before each policy. The text is relevant to the interpretation of each policy to which it relates. Although the supporting text is not policy, it should assist in clarifying the intention of each policy.

### NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT



5.4 The County Council has advised the Parish Council of a minimum amount of additional housing that should be delivered in the Neighbourhood Area during the Northumberland Local Plan period (April 2016 to April 2036). An additional 120 dwellings are required within the Neighbourhood Area in the period until April 2036. The County Council's monitoring data shows that **49 dwellings** have been completed in the period from April 2016 up to 31st March 2021. A further **96 dwellings** have planning permission but have either not commenced or are not yet completed, giving a total supply of **145 new dwellings** in the Neighbourhood Area for the Plan period. Accordingly, the Neighbourhood Plan does not need to allocate additional land for housing.

5.5 In order to support the delivery of any further housing in a sustainable way the Neighbourhood Plan defines a settlement boundary around Belford village. The precise location of the settlement boundary is shown on the Policies Map. The settlement boundary methodology report is contained in the supporting documents (see Appendix A). The settlement boundary includes land with planning permission for housing development and is drawn relatively tightly around the built-up edge of the village to ensure that development in the Parish is managed in a way that recognises the valued landscapes around Belford village. The settlement boundary accommodates enough land within Belford village to meet the housing requirement for the Neighbourhood Area calculated by Northumberland County Council.

5.6 Land outside the settlement boundary will be treated as ‘countryside’ in planning terms. National planning policy requires that planning policies created as part of the statutory development plan should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Policy 1 supports residential development within the settlement of Belford and defines those types of development that will be supported elsewhere subject to compliance with the requirements of other relevant policies in the Plan.

5.7 The Parish Council recognises that certain local housing needs will need to be met during the plan period. Policy 1, and subsequent policies in the Plan therefore support the provision of affordable housing, including that delivered through community-led projects, in the countryside beyond the defined settlement boundary where these meet the nationally prescribed definitions for ‘rural exception sites’ which provide general local needs affordable housing; and ‘first homes exception sites’ which provide affordable housing for first time buyers or people looking to rent their first home.

5.8 The Plan supports limited types of new housing on isolated sites in accordance with national planning policy and guidance. In addition to housing meeting the limited prescribed criteria in isolated locations, the Parish Council has created planning policy support for proposals for individual self-build and custom-build single dwelling developments in the hamlets and on farm steadings across the Parish in recognition of the rural nature of the Parish and the contribution these small communities make in sustaining the main services and facilities throughout the Parish and beyond. Any such proposals must comprise only one dwelling which must demonstrably be a self-build or custom-build project and any individual application for more than one dwelling or for speculative housing development will not be supported.

5.9 In all cases new housing proposals will be required to comply with the requirements of other relevant policies in the Plan, particularly those policies that manage amenity impacts, highway safety and those requiring good design; and for proposals within the

Northumberland Coast AONB great weight will be given to the national planning policy priority of conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB. Collectively, this support for new housing, both inside the settlement boundary of Belford village and in limited locations beyond the village, is considered by the Parish Council to be important in regard to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in a locally distinctive context and in maintaining a sustainable community across the Parish as a whole.

#### **POLICY 1: NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

1. A settlement boundary for Belford village is defined on the Policies Map. New housing development within the settlement boundary will be supported provided no significant adverse impact arises to residential amenity and highway safety, and subject to compliance with relevant policies elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan and other relevant policies in the development plan.
2. Land outside the defined settlement boundary will be treated as countryside whose intrinsic character and beauty must be recognised in all decision making on development proposals in those areas. New housing development in the countryside will not be supported other than in the circumstances described in this Policy and relevant policies in the Development Plan.
3. Affordable housing to meet identified local needs, including through community-led schemes, delivered as 'rural exception sites' or as first homes exception sites' in accordance with the definitions and limitations set out in national planning policy and guidance, will be supported outside the defined settlement boundary subject to compliance with any requirements or limitations created by relevant policies in the Development Plan.
4. Proposals for the construction of single self-build or custom-build dwellings located within or immediately adjacent to the hamlets of Ross, Elwick, Middleton, Detchant, Easington, Waren Mill, Spindleston, Warenton and Mousen will be supported. This is subject to compliance with the relevant policies in the development plan. Exception sites and policies relating to design, highway safety, biodiversity impact, amenity impact and the need to give great weight to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty in the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any such dwellings will only be supported where they are within an existing building curtilage or are well related and adjacent to or adjoining existing built development. Proposals must be designed at an appropriate scale and be sited in a location that minimises adverse impacts on landscape character; and respects and maintains the character of the named settlement within which they are to be built.

## **AFFORDABLE AND COMMUNITY LED HOUSING**



5.10 Community-led housing is the provision of housing which can include affordable and/or market housing where it is supported and initiated by the local community to help meet identified local needs. Projects are conceived, developed, delivered and managed by local community groups. This can include development to meet a general need for affordable housing in a local area, or to meet the needs of a particular group of people in the local area. The concept is based on the expectation that local people can get involved in securing housing to meet their needs either through building new homes, by renovating empty homes or by converting vacant buildings.

5.11 The Parish Council is keen to encourage this concept and supports the Northumberland Local Plan policy HOU7 Exception Sites, aimed at supporting Community-led housing schemes that meet an identified local need on small sites within and on the edge of the village outside the settlement boundary, subject to various conditions.

## **HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE**



5.12 The Bell View report (October 2017), the Bell View Housing Needs Study (2019) and other recent housing surveys done in the Neighbourhood Area show there is a strong demand for housing for older people, particularly for two-bedroom bungalows. The recent development at Bell View Court in Belford village has been popular, and there is a waiting list for these properties. That development consists of bungalows designed as 'lifetime homes' that are fully accessible for wheelchair users. The Parish Council supports and encourages the delivery of more of this type of housing in Belford, which would allow some of the older residents who wish to remain in Belford, to downsize to a property more suitable for their needs. The Parish Council will support, encourage and, where possible, help to enable the delivery of similar proposals. A Community Project is proposed to this effect.

5.13 The Lifetime Homes Standard has now been taken forward through the Building Regulations in the form of an optional national standard for accessible and adaptable dwellings which is set out in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations. The National Planning Policy Framework recommends that new planning policies for housing should make use of these optional technical standards for accessible and adaptable housing where this would address an identified need for such properties.

5.14 The Neighbourhood Plan supports the provision of additional housing for older people. In order to ensure such housing best meets the accessibility needs of an older and ageing population the Parish Council recognises that housing which is especially designed for later living ought to be designed to incorporate those technical standards for accessible and adaptable housing as set out in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations.

5.15 However, the Parish Council also recognises that higher accessibility standards, while very desirable, attract some additional development costs. This matter is addressed in the recently adopted Northumberland Local Plan which requires 20% of all market housing and 50% of all affordable housing to be built to Part M4(2) standards. This would be unlikely to lead to a significant increase in the supply of accessible and adaptable homes in Belford Parish.

5.16 The Parish Council considers that standards of accessibility to and within new housing should be improved generally through amendment to the Building Regulations. However, until such national policy and legislative changes take place and in order to encourage the delivery of more accessible homes, particularly for older people, the Parish Council will support this provision via policy HOU11 in the Northumberland Local Plan.



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES



5.17 Protection of existing community facilities is a matter that was raised by the local community during consultation and engagement in preparing the draft Plan. The community identified several important facilities, and Policy 2 proposes that these should be retained for the future as far as it is practicable, reasonable and economically viable to do so.

5.18 It is possible that new community facilities will be created over time, and that some may be registered for protection using powers created in the Localism Act 2011 which allows communities to bid to take over the ownership and management of certain facilities. Such facilities are commonly referred to as 'Assets of Community Value'. The outcome of formally listing such facilities creates a moratorium on the sale or disposal of buildings by the owners for a period of around six months. That period is intended to allow a local community the opportunity to raise funds to acquire the building. However, the owner cannot be compelled to sell the building to the local community. The purpose of Policy 2 is therefore, in part, to provide added protection to buildings recognised for their community value through the land-use planning development management process to restrict material changes of use to those buildings.

5.19 Where a change of use is proposed that would result in the loss of the community facilities identified in Policy 2 it will be necessary for an applicant to demonstrate how the limitations created by the policy have been met. This means the applicant must show that the facility or services provided are either no longer required by the community; they have been or can be provided by other means of equivalent benefit to the community; or that it is genuinely no longer financially viable to provide the services or facilities.

5.20 Any proposal that would result in the loss of the services or facilities must be accompanied by sufficient documentary evidence to demonstrate how the proposal meets at least one of those exceptions.

## **POLICY 2: COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

1. The following facilities within Belford village, which are identified on the Policies Map, are recognised and protected for their importance in providing valuable services to the local community, residents and businesses located within and beyond Belford Neighbourhood Area and visitors to the area:

CF1: Bell View Resource Centre, 33 West Street  
CF2: Belford Co-op and Post Office, West Street  
CF3: The Belford Pharmacy, 22 West Street  
CF4: Belford Newsagents, 22 High Street  
CF5: The Blue Bell Hotel, Market Place  
CF6: The John Dory Fish & Chip Shop, 8 West Street  
CF6: Belford Community Gym, High Street  
CF7: Belford Museum, 11 Church Street  
CF8: The Parish Church of St. Mary and Churchyard  
CF9: Belford Community Shop, 13 High Street  
CF10: Sunnyhills Farm Shop, South Road  
CF11: Black Swan Hotel, 1 Market Place  
CF12: The Salmon Public House, 31 High Street  
CF13: Well House Coffee Shop, 33 High Street

2. Proposals requiring planning permission that involve the loss or change of use of any of these facilities will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the use is no longer required, viable, or if there is the provision of alternative equivalent facilities in a suitable accessible location.
3. Proposals for new community facilities and the expansion of existing facilities within the Belford settlement boundary defined on the Policies Map will be supported provided no significant adverse impact arises to residential amenity and highway safety, and subject to compliance with relevant policies in the Development Plan.

## **RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE**

5.21 Policy 3 seeks to ensure protection of the outdoor recreational open space at Belford Primary School and the former Middle School; and the skate park located adjacent to the Fire Station. The policy creates a general presumption against built development on these sites, but recognises, in accordance with long established national planning policy, that some flexibility must exist to allow for the re-provision of new open space of equivalent or better

value should acceptable and sustainable proposals emerge that would lead to the loss of these open spaces.

**POLICY 3: RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE**

1. The outdoor recreational space at the following locations, which are defined on the Policies Map, are designated for protection as a valued recreational open space:

ROS 1: School Fields east of Raynham Close; and

ROS 2: Skate Park rear of Belford Fire Station

2. These recreational open spaces shall not be built on unless:
  - a. an independent assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space to be surplus to requirements; or
  - b. the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
  - c. the development is for alternative sports or recreational provision, the benefits of which are clearly demonstrated to outweigh the loss of the current use.
3. Development of ancillary facilities on the sites will be supported where that would:
  - a. be appropriate in scale and would not detract from the character of the site or surroundings;
  - b. not have a significant and unacceptable adverse impact upon residential amenity;
  - c. not be detrimental to the function that the open space performs;
  - d. contribute positively to the setting and quality of the open space; and
  - e. be necessary to, or would facilitate, the functioning of the open space.

## LOCAL GREEN SPACE



5.22 The National Planning Policy Framework created the opportunity for local areas of green space which are particularly special to the local community to be protected from development in the same way that Green Belt is protected. A number of criteria must be met, and most green spaces will not be suitable for designation as Local Green Space. In order for land to qualify for designation as Local Green Space the NPPF requires that it must be:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

5.23 An assessment of the value attributed by the local community to various green spaces was undertaken and is set out in the report 'Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan: Protecting Open Space Background Report' (March 2021). The Neighbourhood Plan designates five areas



that have been identified as being particularly special, all of which meet the criteria required by national policy.

5.24 Belford Jubilee Woodland Park was created by a group of volunteers in 2012. The area was cleared, and new trees were planted by representatives of many different interest groups in the village. A path was laid and further planting of Memorial trees took place. Since 2012 a number of plants and bulbs have been added. The area is looked after by school children and a number of volunteers in the village. The area has seating, which provides a tranquil space for people in the village to enjoy.

5.25 Belford Community Woodland at Croftfield was started in 2006 with a grant from the Woodland Trust. The area is run by volunteers, and has involved native tree planting, the installation of paths, and is managed for the enjoyment of villagers.

5.26 There are two play parks that are highly valued in Belford: Croftfield Playground; and Central Park. Central Park, which is surrounded by housing on all sides, provides a valuable play space in high density housing in Belford. This play area has recently had new equipment installed and provides play equipment for all ages and abilities.

5.27 Belford Football Ground is an important green space and recreational facility located within Belford village. Its protection as Local Green Space will help to secure this amenity and prevent its loss to inappropriate development in the long term.

#### **POLICY 4: LOCAL GREEN SPACE**

1. The sites listed below and shown on the Policies Map are designated as areas of Local Green Space which will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt:

LGS1: Belford Central Park Playground, off William's Way

LGS2: Belford Community Woodland, Croftfield

LGS3: Belford Jubilee Woodland Park

LGS4: Croftfield Playground

LGS5: Belford Football Ground (The Meadows), Croftfield

2. Management of any development within these Local Green Spaces must be consistent with national policy on Green Belts. Inappropriate development will not be permitted other than where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Local Green Space by reason of inappropriateness, and other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

3. Any development within LGS2 and LGS3 must not impact the function of flood defences located in these areas.

## BELFORD VILLAGE CENTRE



5.28 Community consultation revealed a strong desire to improve the public realm in Belford village centre, and retain as far as possible local shops, services and facilities. In particular, the Parish Council is keen to prevent the further loss of local businesses to residential development within the village centre, either through change of use and conversion, or through redevelopment, since this is perceived to be likely to lead to a longer-term decline in the viability and attractiveness of the village centre. While there are a number of different uses, including housing within the village centre, the Parish Council has sought to define an area through the Neighbourhood Plan where the main concentration of buildings and frontages comprising commercial uses, services and facilities are located. Policy 7 of the Plan applies specifically to this area which is defined on the policies map.

5.29 Although the planning system cannot prevent shops from closing, recent changes made to the national system of building and land use classification in September 2020 now provide more flexibility for landowners and developers at a time when the Government sees a need to repurpose town centres and high streets. These changes have the potential to increase the range of uses that could replace shops in town and village centres.

5.30 The changes to the Use Classes Order have created a new business use class (Class E); and Class F1 and Class F2 which relate to various leisure, learning and local community uses. Class E replaces previous classifications by amalgamating a range of uses into a single class.



This includes the former use classes covering shops, offices, light industrial uses and some leisure uses which are now all interchangeable. This new use class has been created to allow for a mix of uses to reflect changes in shopping habits and the changing needs of retailers and other businesses. It will allow a building to be used flexibly by having a number of uses taking place concurrently or by allowing different uses to take place at different times of the day. Changes to another use, or mix of uses, within the same Use Class will not require planning permission.

5.31 The Neighbourhood Plan cannot introduce policy that conflicts with changes of use that are otherwise permissible in law. However, the Plan does seek to support the retention of existing services by resisting their loss where planning permission may be required for a change of use. The Parish Council is also keen to encourage the introduction of new businesses and community facilities within the village that will meet the needs of the local community and visitors, and uses that will not undermine the vitality and viability of Belford. Policy 5 therefore seeks to prevent the loss of shops and other community facilities to housing development (where permission is required for such a change), and supports a range of uses that will make a positive impact on community life in a variety of ways. For clarity, the Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map defines the properties to which Policy 7 will apply by reference to their frontages.

5.32 Belford village centre has a number of distinctive and high quality historic shop fronts, attractive buildings and a pleasant public realm. The Parish Council is keen to support the maintenance and improvement of the built environment and the public realm within the village. Policy 5 therefore supports positive proposals which will achieve this aim.

#### **POLICY 5: BELFORD VILLAGE CENTRE**

1. Within the centre of Belford Village Centre as defined on the Policies Map, the loss of shops, services and other facilities, including those within Class E of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order, as a result of change of use or redevelopment will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed use will not have a significant adverse impact on highway safety or residential amenity and will make a positive contribution to Belford Village Centre by maintaining or improving the economic vitality, viability and sustainability of Belford by:
  - a. providing a service that will benefit residents and/or visitors to the area; or
  - b. providing a use that will support existing businesses in the area.
2. The change of use of ground floor premises within Belford Village Centre currently in Class E, Class F1, or Class F2 uses to residential use, including as overnight or short-

stay tourist accommodation will only be supported if the tests in Policy 2, criteria 2 are applied in each case and there is an adequate standard of residential amenity and no detrimental impact on highway safety.

3. Proposals to improve the external appearance of buildings within Belford Village Centre and the contribution they make to the street-scene and the public realm will be supported.
4. Proposals within Belford Village Centre to improve car and cycle parking, combined with improvements to the public realm for pedestrians and other users will be supported provided that these do not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on highway safety or residential amenity and they preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Belford Conservation Area.

## **BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**



5.33 The provision of good telecommunications is particularly important in rural areas for both residents and for businesses to ensure they can operate effectively. The Northumberland Local Plan Policy ICT2 New Developments requires all new business and residential proposals be provided with the infrastructure necessary to allow the development to be served by high quality communications infrastructure. Consultation with the business community and residents showed a high level of support for improved broadband infrastructure. Fibre-optic connections are currently the most robust and future-proof method of delivering high performance connectivity.

5.34 Policy 6 seeks to ensure that all new development incorporates the infrastructure necessary to install high speed broadband when it is available. It also supports the provision of high-speed broadband infrastructure where planning permission would be required. Where possible, it is preferable in the interests of visual amenity, and to limit impacts on landscape character, to use existing buildings or other structures to accommodate new infrastructure since this helps to avoid a proliferation of telecommunications masts. This will be particularly important in the AONB and other designated landscapes in the Neighbourhood Area.

**POLICY 6: BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

1. Proposals which secure the expansion of electronic communication networks and high-speed broadband along with improvements to connectivity will be supported in accordance with the relevant policies in the Development Plan. Applicants should demonstrate that:
  - a) opportunities have been explored to erect apparatus on existing buildings, masts or other structures,
  - b) the number of radio and telecommunication masts is the minimum necessary for optimum operation of the network
  - c) impacts are minimised on the character and appearance of the AONB and other valued and designated key qualities of the landscape and Belford Conservation Area.
2. Applications for new development should where possible ensure provision is made for suitable ducting to enable more than one service provider to provide a fibre connection to individual properties from connection cabinets located on the public highway, or some alternative point available to different service providers.

**RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

5.35 The Parish Council recognises the need to ensure that opportunities are provided to retain existing businesses in the area and to support their growth alongside the creation of new businesses. The development plan contains policies which are concerned to promote rural businesses and tourism. These policies are in the Northumberland Local Plan and include the following; Policy ECN 11 Employment uses in built-up areas and home working, Policy ECN 12 A strategy for rural economic growth (Strategic Policy), Policy ECN 13 Meeting rural employment needs (Strategic Policy), Policy ECN 14 Farm / rural diversification and Policy ECN 15 Tourism and visitor development.

5.36 Both new and existing businesses can provide much needed opportunities for employment and provide services and facilities that meet the needs of residents and visitors to the area. Policy 7 provides further support for the growth and development of businesses, including those that cater for the needs of visitors to the area, both within the settlement boundaries of Belford and, subject to various caveats, in the countryside beyond.

5.37 The Parish Council is also keen to support more tourism, and this was recognised as having support from the local community through engagement on the Plan. The vision for the Plan is to act as a 'springboard' to the Northumberland National Park and the North Northumberland Coast AONB. Belford is in close proximity to both, and offers a perfect location to expand and improve on tourist and visitor facilities. The Northumberland Local Plan supports sustainable tourism and leisure development where this respects the character of the countryside.

5.38 Local Plan Policy ECN 15 Tourism and visitor development promotes tourism development which is sustainable and protects the environment.

**POLICY 7: RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

Proposals for new business premises and the expansion of existing businesses within the settlement boundary of Belford village as defined on the Policies Map will be supported subject to compliance with relevant policies in the Development Plan.

5.39 Belford Industrial Estate provides a range of jobs and the Plan supports the retention of the Industrial Estate for employment use. The Industrial Estate is identified on the Policies Map. The Plan supports the expansion of industrial uses at the Industrial Estate, and into the countryside beyond the Industrial Estate where this accords with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, in order to promote more employment opportunities in the Neighbourhood Area. Policy 8 also seeks to guard against the loss of employment land for residential development, the site being somewhat distant from Belford village.

5.40 Although well outside Belford village, there are a number of residential properties directly adjacent to Belford Industrial Estate. The living conditions for people in those houses must not be made worse through the impact arising from development. Therefore, while Policy 8 seeks to prevent the loss of land at the Industrial Estate to residential development, and it supports development that secures the retention and expansion of employment opportunities, any such proposals must be subject to careful consideration being given to the impact development may have on the amenity of existing residents and on highway safety.

#### **POLICY 8: BELFORD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE**

1. Development proposals to expand businesses and proposals to create new units within and adjoining the Belford Industrial Estate will be supported provided they are in accordance with Policy 7 in this Plan and relevant policies in the Development Plan, and do not lead to an unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby residents or on highway safety.
2. When it is necessary to achieve effective screening, proposals must include sufficient, appropriate and effective structural landscaping using native species.
3. The change of use of any existing buildings from employment generating uses to residential use, or the construction of new dwellings through demolition and redevelopment of existing buildings within the Industrial Estate will not be supported.

#### **PROVISION AND IMPROVEMENT OF WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES**



5.41 There are a number of routes in the Neighbourhood Area that could be improved for walkers and cyclists. Another important issue, identified by the community during early consultation, is the need to provide a better cycling and walking route to link Belford to the coast. The A1 is a substantial barrier, and a means of crossing the A1 for cyclists and walkers by way of an underpass, would open up opportunities for tourism in Belford. The A1 forms part of the strategic road network and agreement would be required with National Highways to deliver these projects. Policy 9 provides support for projects that involve creating or



improving the physical infrastructure necessary to improve accessibility around the Neighbourhood Area for cyclists and walkers.

5.42 Community engagement resulted in suggestions regarding the benefits associated with re-opening Belford Railway Station as part of an aspiration to reintroduce a passenger service on the East Coast Mainline stopping at Belford. The need for general improvements to the frequency of public transport services has also been raised. Both of these matters do not currently create the need for land-use planning policies. However, relevant proposals for both are included in the Community Actions in the Plan.

#### **POLICY 9: PROVISION AND IMPROVEMENT OF WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES**

The creation and improvement of footpaths and cycle ways will be supported.  
The creation of a new route to improve connectivity between Belford and the Northumberland Coast by means of a safe crossing over or under the A1 will be supported.

#### **BELFORD CONSERVATION AREA**



5.43 Belford Conservation Area covers a large proportion of the historic part of the village of Belford, and includes the Registered Park and Garden at Belford Hall. The extent of the Belford Conservation Area is shown on the Policies Map. The Conservation Area does not have a Character Appraisal. There is therefore little detailed recorded and verified information on the significance of the Belford Conservation Area or heritage assets within it.

5.44 Belford has a number of distinctive and high quality historic shop fronts. Many are located within the Belford Conservation Area where it is appropriate to conserve the

remaining important heritage assets and features that contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area. Where new shop fronts are proposed it is important to ensure that these preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the village and that these do not lead to damage to the high quality historic environment in Belford village.

5.45 Where development is proposed within or near to the Conservation Area it will be particularly important to give appropriate weight to the following matters when decisions are made on those proposals. These include the need to:

- improve the public realm in the Market Place;
- have special regard to the significance of the Belford Hall Registered Park and Garden;
- give special consideration to the significance of buildings in the Conservation Area that are designated and non-designated heritage assets;
- encourage and support the use of traditional materials in new development including the use of buff sandstone, Welsh slate and brick, with chimneys incorporated into house designs as necessary, and
- encourage and support the use of traditional window and door design in new development and particularly the use of appropriate front doors onto the High Street.

5.46 Policy 10 provides a general policy that requires, in accordance with national planning policy, legislation and guidance, appropriate consideration to be given to the impact development may have on the character and significance of the Belford Conservation Area and heritage assets within and adjoining it. This policy also supports Local Plan policies Policy ENV 7 Historic environment and heritage assets and Policy ENV 9 Conservation Areas which have detailed criteria for the consideration of development in the Conservation Area. To further support implementation of Policy 10 a Community Project is identified which will involve the Parish Council actively pursuing procurement of the preparation of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal, in partnership with Northumberland County Council, to ensure an Appraisal can be completed as soon as possible to better inform decision making on planning applications.

**POLICY 10: BELFORD CONSERVATION AREA**

1. Development proposals that contribute positively to the conservation area, better revealing its significance will be supported. Development within or affecting the setting of the Belford Conservation Area will be expected to preserve or enhance the character or appearance and quality of the Conservation Area and also make a positive contribution to local character, and distinctiveness, through the careful use of materials and design.

2. Development proposals that lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of the Belford Conservation Area will be refused. Development of poor design that fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance and distinctiveness of the Conservation Area will be refused.
3. Any proposed alterations to shop fronts, or the creation of new shop fronts, must reflect the design features dominant in the traditional shop fronts in the village centre and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Belford Conservation Area.

## **DESIGN IN NEW DEVELOPMENT**

5.47 One of the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan is to achieve good design in new development and thereby contribute to the creation of well-designed places. Policy 11 seeks to ensure that design reflecting the local vernacular is encouraged in new development proposals, without stifling opportunities for innovative design in new development. High quality design is expected in all development proposed in the Neighbourhood Area.

5.48 The Parish Council supports more sustainable building taking place in the Neighbourhood Area in order to help in addressing the impacts of climate change. Schemes which incorporate high levels of energy efficiency and sustainable design features will be given support, providing they comply with other relevant policies in the Plan.

### **POLICY 11: DESIGN IN NEW DEVELOPMENT**

1. New development, including extensions and conversions, must incorporate high quality design and demonstrate, where appropriate, how:
  - a. local context and character are respected in terms of scale, density, height, massing, layout, materials, hard and soft landscaping, and means of enclosure; and
  - b. features including windows, doors, roof lights, chimneys, flues, roofs, and boundary treatments have regard to surrounding character and materials used locally; and
  - c. appropriate landscaping and planting have been incorporated into the scheme including the retention of trees and hedgerows where possible, and that an appropriate period for landscaping and planting establishment, maintenance and replacement where necessary is secured; and
  - d. a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) has been incorporated or it can be demonstrated why such a system would not be practicable; and



- e. measures have been incorporated to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation; and
  - f. the massing, height, scale and proximity of the proposed development to any neighbouring property does not result in unacceptable adverse amenity impacts arising on the living conditions of existing or future residents through loss of light, overshadowing or over-dominance; and
  - g. opportunities have been taken where possible to incorporate embedded renewables, such as solar panels, heat pumps and other measures to reduce the carbon footprint of the building; and
  - h. opportunities have been taken in the layout and building orientation to minimise energy consumption and maximise passive solar gain; and
  - i. appropriate safe vehicular and pedestrian access can be achieved.
2. Development that is not well designed will be refused especially where it fails to reflect the criteria in this policy and other relevant policies in the development plan.
  3. For areas within the Northumberland Coast AONB, development proposals will be required to incorporate the principles contained in the most recent version of the Northumberland Coast AONB Design Guide.

## PROTECTED HABITATS AND SPECIES

5.49 Habitats and the species they support are a main attraction for visitors to the Neighbourhood Area, and are valued by residents. There are a number of sites of national and international importance for their ecological value within the area. European Sites are protected by legislation in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. European sites in the Neighbourhood Area are the Northumbria Coast Ramsar site, the Berwickshire and Northumberland Coast SAC, the North Northumberland Dunes SAC, the Northumbria Coast SPA and the Northumberland Marine SPA. These areas are shown on the Designations Map that accompanies the Plan.

5.50 Nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The Northumberland Shore SSSI, which is currently in a favourable condition, is located in the Neighbourhood Area along with the following other sites;

- Colour Heugh and Bowden Doors SSSI
- Spindleton Heughs SSSI

- Bradford Kames SSSI
- Brada Hill SSSI
- Bamburgh coast & Hills SSSI

The Plan area also contains the following ancient woodlands:

- Blagdon Dean
- Dunnings wood
- Bradford Dean

5.51 The impact people can have on these sites, and on species that reside in or resort to the sites, particularly through recreational activity can be significant. Principally, this is associated with disturbance to protected species. In order to address this matter, and to comply with national and international legislation protecting these areas, Northumberland County Council has created a scheme to mitigate additional impacts associated with any increase in the number of dwellings or tourist accommodation in close proximity to the protected sites. The Coastal Mitigation Service (CMS) has been created to provide various services, including a warden scheme, to mitigate impacts from new development. This requires financial contributions from any new residential development, including tourist accommodation, constructed within a zone extending 10km inland from the coast.

5.52 National guidance is concerned to protect the ecology of sensitive areas and the Local Plan policies ENV 2 Biodiversity and geodiversity and Policy ENV 5 Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide protection and must be closely observed. Furthermore, the Marine Management Organisation is concerned to protect and improve the ecology of the coastal area and has produced the North East Marine Plan which is also relevant.

5.53 Policy 12 requires contributions to the CMS from relevant development, or the provision of alternative effective mitigation measures. This is necessary to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan complies with legal requirements set out in the relevant Regulations. Detailed advice on the application of the CMS and financial contributions is contained in Appendix H4 Coastal Mitigation in the Local Plan.

#### **POLICY 12: PROTECTED HABITATS AND SPECIES**

1. To ensure that the impacts arising from increasing levels of recreational disturbance on coastal Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European Sites can be addressed, all development that will result in a net increase in the number of residential units or

tourist accommodation will be required to contribute to the Coastal Mitigation Service or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness.

2. All financial contributions required in accordance with this policy will be secured by way of a planning obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or any subsequent amending legislation.
3. Wherever biodiversity is impacted by development the proposal must secure a measurable 'net gain' for biodiversity through mitigation, restoration, and/or, as a last resort compensatory measures as necessary.

## DEVELOPMENT AND WATER QUALITY

5.52 A number of watercourses discharge from the Belford Neighbourhood Area into sites protected at the national and international level for their ecological value, particularly on the coast at Budle Bay and at Fenham Flats. Protection of these areas is afforded by various designations including the Lindisfarne SPA and Ramsar site, Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, Lindisfarne SSSI, Northumberland Marine SPA, Berwickshire & North Northumberland Coast SAC and North Northumberland Dunes SAC. These are among the most sensitive sites in the County.

5.55 The condition of European sites is assessed at the SSSI level by Natural England. SSSIs are constituents of European sites, so each SPA or SAC has several underlying SSSI designations. Lindisfarne SSSI is currently assessed by Natural England as being in unfavourable condition. The condition assessment for this area states that:

*'Poor water quality flowing into Budle Bay has resulted in the growth of the macroalgae Enteromorpha, which has a direct impact on the SAC mudflat and feeding habitat of SPA birds. Natural England are working with the Environment Agency to investigate sources of pollution and prevention measures. A Diffuse Water Plan is required to investigate pollution sources/pathways and to help achieve Favourable Condition of the site.'*

5.56 Further input of nitrogen resulting from development could contribute to further harm arising to the interest features of those sites. As such, Natural England has identified the catchment that feeds into the Lindisfarne Special Protection Area/Ramsar Site as one in which 'nutrient neutrality' is required for all new developments. This includes all overnight accommodation including new homes, student accommodation, care homes, tourism attractions and accommodation. Any new development that will increase foul water discharges will need to be accompanied by a nutrient budget.

Northumberland County Council has produced guidance to illustrate the type of developments to which this policy applies and how the nutrient budget is calculated. This information is contained in Appendix B to this Plan. Further advice can be obtained from the County Ecologist at Northumberland County Council.

#### **POLICY 13: DEVELOPMENT AND WATER QUALITY**

Developments that could increase nitrogen levels in the Lindisfarne SSSI and SPA through increases in foul water discharges must be accompanied by a nutrient budget and a plan to offset any increase in nitrogen levels entering the SSSI and SPA. Planning permission will only be granted where this nutrient budget shows that there will be no net increase in nitrogen entering the SSSI and SPA. Foul water discharges must be accompanied by a nutrient budget and a plan to offset any increases in nitrogen levels entering the Lindisfarne SPA and Ramsar Site. Planning permission will only be granted where this nutrient budget shows that there will be no net increase in nitrogen entering the Lindisfarne SPA.

### **VALUED LANDSCAPES**

5.57 The landscapes around Belford are highly valued by the local community. They contribute to the attractiveness of the Parish, and areas beyond, for existing residents, for tourists and visitors, but also as a valued setting within which businesses can develop and people can choose to live. The Parish Council is keen to ensure that appropriate recognition is given to the impact development may have on local landscapes when decisions are made on planning applications bearing in mind the value attached to the landscape by the local community, visitors and agencies involved in the landscape management process. Particular recognition must be given to the national designations including the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of that area.

5.58 The Belford Valued Landscapes Background Report (November 2022) brings together relevant evidence to support a planning policy that defines an area of 'valued landscape'; and that planning policy recognition is given to defined important valued views within, to and from the Neighbourhood Area. The special landscape features identified in this report should be taken into account in decision making on planning applications to ensure that the places most valued by the local community are protected.

5.59 Heritage coasts were established to conserve the best stretches of undeveloped coast in England. These are defined by agreement between the relevant maritime local authorities and Natural England. Heritage coasts were established for the following purposes:

- to conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coastline, their terrestrial, coastal and marine flora and fauna, and their heritage features;
- to encourage and help the public to enjoy, understand and appreciate these areas;
- to maintain and improve the health of inshore waters affecting heritage coasts and their beaches through appropriate environmental management measures; and
- to take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and fishing and the economic and social needs of the small communities on these coasts

5.60 Although the Northumberland Heritage Coast sits within the AONB and therefore benefits from protection through that designation, national planning policy also recognises the need for heritage coasts to be protected through the development management process. Specifically, national policy expects that local authorities should maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as heritage coast; and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast. Policy 17 recognises the importance of the Heritage Coast within Belford Parish and requires that decisions taken on development proposals should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within the Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.

5.61 Particular care must be taken in decision making to ensure development impacts on the important nationally designated and defined landscapes, and those defined through the Neighbourhood Plan, are fully understood and properly considered prior to development in those areas being supported.

#### **POLICY 14: VALUED LANDSCAPES**

1. An Area of Valued Landscape is defined on the Policies Map. Any development that has a significant adverse impact on important characteristics or qualities of the landscape in this area, as described in the Belford Valued Landscapes Background Report (November 2022) will not be supported.
2. Key views to and from Belford Hall Estate, Chapel Hill and Chapel Crag are recognised, in the Belford Valued Landscapes Background Report (November 2022), as features characteristic to the settlement that are sensitive to change within the surrounding landscape. Proposals for development on the settlement edges of Belford that affect the landscape character of these key views will not be supported unless it is demonstrated that the development can be sensitively accommodated in the landscape without significant adverse effect on important views into and out of the settlement.
3. Development proposals in the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be assessed having regard to the need to give great weight to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB. Where

appropriate, the assessment of development impacts will take account of the findings set out in the Belford Valued Landscapes Background Report (November 2021) This will include the need to have regard to the impact development proposals within and beyond the AONB boundaries would be likely to have on the iconic features, the landscape character and important viewpoints included in that report, including Bamburgh Castle and Greenshean Hill. Proposals for major development in the Northumberland Coast AONB will not be supported other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest in accordance with national planning policies and relevant development plan policies.

4. Any proposal for development considered likely to have a significant impact on the surrounding landscape, townscape or seascape character of the site and/or visual amenity and/or the special qualities of AONB and/or important characteristics or qualities within the Area of Valued Landscape, must be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced person to clearly demonstrate the landscape and visual impact anticipated to arise from the development.

## **6. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

### **Monitoring**

6.1 Belford Parish Council will expect the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan to be given appropriate weight when decisions are made by the County Council on planning applications. Once the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' its policies must be given full weight in the decision-making process. This is important in ensuring that the vision and objectives set out in the Plan are achieved, and to ensure that the County Council as local planning authority follows national policy and legislation which require that decisions must be made in accordance with policies in the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 Decision making on planning applications remains with Northumberland County Council who will have their own monitoring procedures in place. However, Belford Parish Council will undertake its own monitoring of the use of policies in the Plan by the County Council when they make decisions; and the effectiveness of policies in the Plan in delivering the vision and objectives. It is anticipated that monitoring by the Parish Council will be recorded and reported on an annual basis.

### **Review**

6.3 Subject to the outcome of monitoring on the use and effectiveness of the Plan, and having regard to future changes in other local and national planning policies, the Parish Council will consider the need for review of the Plan as a whole, or of individual policies in the Plan. Recommendations on the need for review will be reported to the Parish Council at least annually. Any decision to review the Plan would require confirmation by resolution of the Parish Council.

### **Community Projects**

6.4 Progress on the Community Projects identified in the Plan will be monitored regularly and be reported to the Parish Council at least annually.

## **7. COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

7.1 The Parish Council will commit to pursuing the following Community Projects as priorities that meet the needs and aspirations of the local community. This will include initiating discussions with relevant organisations and, where appropriate, exploring and supporting bids for funding to achieve the implementation of the Projects.

### **CP1 Belford Railway Station**

The Parish Council will work with Northumberland County Council as Transport Authority, National Rail, Network Rail, the Train Operating Companies and any appropriate groups and organisations to pursue the re-opening of Belford Railway Station for passenger transport.

### **CP2 Walking and Cycling Infrastructure**

The Parish Council will work with Northumberland County Council as Transport Authority and as Highway Authority for the local road network to pursue opportunities for the implementation of improvements to the walking and cycling infrastructure throughout the Parish, and specifically the creation of a safe and convenient cycling and walking underpass that links Belford with the coast by crossing the A1. The Parish Council will work with Northumberland County Council and National Highways, as Highway Authority for the Strategic Road Network, in relation to any proposal that has with an influence upon the A1.

### **CP3 Maintenance of Public Rights of Way**

The Parish Council will work with Northumberland County Council as Highway Authority to secure a commitment from the County Council to pursue a programme of planned long term regular maintenance and repair of rights of way, including the provision, repair and replacement of waymarking signage throughout the Parish.

### **CP4 Public Transport Network Improvements**

The Parish Council will work with Northumberland County Council as Transport Authority, and with public transport operators and community transport operators to explore mechanisms and funding opportunities to assist in the development and long term maintenance of improved and more widespread public and community transport projects and services to, from and throughout Belford Parish.



### **CP5 Conservation Area Character Appraisal**

To further support implementation of Policy 10 of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council will actively pursue the early preparation of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal, in partnership with Northumberland County Council, Historic England and any other relevant organisations.

### **CP6 Public Realm Improvements: Belford High Street and Village Centre**

The Parish Council will explore all opportunities to design and implement improvements to the public realm within Belford village with all relevant partners and agencies including Northumberland County Council, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and the North of Tyne Combined Authority. The aim of the public realm improvements will be to address the legacy associated with the historic design and use of the main roads through the village which allowed for dominant use by vehicular traffic. The Parish Council will prepare a high-level brief for the work anticipated as being required to transform the village centre and approach roads to create an environment that creates greater pedestrian priority and a more pleasant environment. This may include the following improvements:

- Entry points into Belford marked by symbolic gateways on the B6349 at South Road, West Street and the top of North Bank which make drivers aware that they are leaving a major road and entering a village centre where pedestrians have priority over traffic.
- Reduce vehicle speed to a maximum of 20mph.
- Reduce the carriageway widths and widen footways.
- Create defined kerbside parking areas.
- Create cycle lanes to encourage cyclists.
- Create space for outdoor eating and drinking opportunities.
- Reduce street clutter.
- Modify junction geometry to create more safe movement space for pedestrians.
- Introduce street trees and planting.
- Introduce seating at strategic locations to encourage street life.
- Create a useable significant public space at the Market Cross in the centre of the village.
- Remodel the bridge over Belford Burn on West Street to provide useable public space that exploits views of the Burn.

### **CP7 Conservation Area: Design and Maintenance Guidance for Residents**

The Parish Council will seek the support of Northumberland County Council, Historic England and any other relevant organisations in preparing an advisory document to assist, advise and encourage residents to maintain and upgrade properties located in the Belford Conservation Area in a coordinated manner which is sympathetic to the character of Conservation Area.

### **CP8 Conservation Area: Shop Signage Guidance**

The Parish Council will seek the support of Northumberland County Council, Historic England and any other relevant organisations in preparing guidance on hanging and shop fascia signage for shops and commercial properties in the Belford Conservation Area.

### **CP9 Flood Risk: Establish a Community Flood Group**

The Parish Council will work with the support of the Environment Agency to establish a Community Flood Group and disseminate information on flood warning and resilience.

## **Appendix A: The Evidence Base Documents**

[Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan: Valued Landscapes Background Report \(December 2022\)](#)

[Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan: Settlement Boundary Methodology and Background Report \(September 2021\)](#)

[Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan: Protecting Open Space Background Report \(March 2021\)](#)

[Bell View: Strengths and Needs analysis of catchment area \(October 2017\)](#)

[Bell View Housing Needs Study \(2019\)](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\) \(February 2019\) \(July 2021\)](#)

[National Planning Practice Guidance \(online resource\)](#)

[Natural England Character Areas: Northumberland Coastal Plain \(2015\)](#)

[Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Design Guide for the Built Environment \(2009\)](#)

[Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study \(August 2013\)](#)

[Northumberland Key Land Use Impact Study, PART A: Landscape Sensitivity at Settlement Edges \(September 2010\)](#)

[Northumberland Local Plan \(Adopted March 2022\)](#)

[Northumberland Sandstone Ridges and Vales – A Valued Landscape \(January 2021\)](#)

[Northumberland Coast AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019](#)

[Northumberland County Council Landscape Character Assessment \(Part A: Landscape Classification\) \(August 2010\)](#)

[Northumberland County Council Landscape Character Assessment \(Part B: The Changing Landscape\) \(August 2010\)](#)

[Northumberland County Council Strategic Housing Availability Land Assessment \(2018\)](#)

[Northumberland County Wide Housing Needs Survey Final Report \(updated 2018\)](#)

[Northumberland Sandstone Ridges and Vales A Valued Landscape, Final Report, Alison Farmer \(2021\)](#)

[Northumberland Sandstone Ridges and Vales A Valued Landscape, Summary Report, Alison Farmer \(2021\)](#)

[Northumberland Sandstone Ridges and Vales A Valued Landscape, Final Report, Alison Farmer, Drawings 1-4 \(2021\)](#)

[Northumberland Sandstone Ridges and Vales A Valued Landscape, Final Report, Alison Farmer, Drawings 5-11 \(2021\)](#)

## **Appendix B: Nutrient Neutrality Guidance**



### **The introduction of nutrient neutrality for Lindisfarne SSSI and Special Protection Area**

#### **Guidance for applicants on completing a nutrient budget**

##### Introduction

On 16 March 2022 the Government contacted Local Planning Authorities concerning a range of protected areas in England that are affected by nitrogen and phosphorus pollution, to explain that planning applications for developments likely to increase sewage discharges in the catchments of these protected areas must be accompanied by a nutrient budget showing how the level of phosphorus or nitrogen entering the protected area will change should the proposed development be implemented. It is only then possible to grant permission for the development if the nutrient budget shows that there will not be a net increase in nitrogen or phosphorus levels in the protected area as a result of the development.

The catchment of the Lindisfarne SSSI and Special Protection Area is one such catchment, due to the impact of excessive levels of nitrogen in the waters around Holy Island and in Budle Bay. This is causing the growth of extensive mats of filamentous green algae across the mudflats and sandflats in this area, preventing the wading birds for which the SSSI and SPA is designated from accessing the invertebrate food on which they depend.

##### Completing a Nutrient Budget

It is necessary for nutrient budgets to be submitted with planning applications for developments that could increase nitrogen levels in the Lindisfarne SSSI and SPA through increases in sewage discharges, whether these are going to a private sewage treatment plant or a Northumbrian Water sewage treatment works. Natural England has created a Nutrient Budget Calculator in the form of an Excel workbook that you will need to complete, and has provided a guidance document to help with this.

Start by making a copy of the 'Lindisfarne Nutrient Budget Calculator' workbook and ensure that you have the Natural England 'Nutrient Budget Calculator Guidance Document' and this note to hand. At the bottom of the workbook you will see a series of tabs, the first three of which provide some background information and the fourth of which provides instructions for completing the calculator. Subsequent tabs take you through the calculator stage by stage:

## Development Site Details

This sheet is largely self-explanatory, although you won't yet have a planning application number if you are completing this to submit with an application, in which case that box can be left blank.

### Stage 1

You will see that you have to enter a few details about the development here. The average occupancy rate for residential dwellings is set at 2.4, which is based on ONS data. Any change to this figure has to be supported by evidence and so please do not change it without the agreement of NCC Ecologists.

For tourism developments including campsites, static caravan parks, shepherd's huts and barn conversions, the average occupancy rate of 2.4 can be adjusted to reflect the lower occupancy rate for tourism developments. Northumberland Tourism data shows the average occupancy rate for self-catering accommodation in the county to be 56%, and therefore an occupancy rate of 1.34 can be used for tourism accommodation to reflect this. If the accommodation is closed for part of the year, a further proportionate reduction can be made, of one 1/12th for each month it is closed each year.

If your development is on mains sewerage you are asked to select which treatment works it is on, from a dropdown list. You will see from the final tab (called Lookups) that all of the sewage treatment works in the catchment have the same permit level for nitrogen, so don't worry if you don't know which treatment works your development will be connected to – you can just choose a nearby one as the result will be the same whichever you select.

If your development will rely on non-mains drainage, please select Package Treatment Plant or Septic Tank as appropriate. You must choose the default settings for these unless you know which make and model of treatment plant you have or will be installing and the level of total nitrogen (not just ammoniacal nitrogen or nitrate) it will be discharging. If you are buying a new one it is well worth comparing the performance of different models based on total nitrogen output and choosing one that minimises this by both nitrifying and denitrifying as part of the treatment process, as these can achieve a total nitrogen level of less than 10mg per litre, a figure that is several times lower than some other systems.

### Stage 2

This involves inputting data concerning a range of characteristics of the development site including soil drainage type and annual average rainfall. To discover this information, click on the 'Instructions' tab and scroll down to the bottom of that sheet where you find 'Site specific data collection instructions'. These instructions provide links to the websites that will provide all necessary information for the location of your development site. It is important that the total area included at this stage matches the area within the red line of your planning application.

### Stage 3

At stage 3 you identify all the land uses proposed for your development. Please see the table on page 13 of the 'Nutrient Budget Guidance Document' to identify the appropriate land use type. For example, if your development is a barn conversion with a garden, 'Residential urban land' should be chosen. Campsites for tents and touring caravans could be defined as 'greenspace' as long as fertilizers will not be used on the grassland and dog waste will be managed. For a static caravan park with a children's play area, the area occupied by caravans, roads, buildings etc would be 'residential urban land' and the area occupied by the children's play area would be 'open urban land'. It is important that the total area included at this stage matches the area within the red line of your planning application.

#### Stage 4

This sheet will show you the total additional nitrogen produced by your development per year. Unless this is zero or a minus number (which will only occur if a nitrogen-intensive land use is being changed to a less intensive one), this is the total nitrogen loading that requires offsetting to achieve neutrality overall.

#### **Potential opportunities to achieve nutrient neutrality yourself**

If you are applying for planning permission for a development that will increase nitrogen levels in Lindisfarne SSSI/SPA, there may be ways in which you can achieve nutrient neutrality, either by upgrading your sewage treatment system (if your site is not on the mains) or by changing the use of some land so that it produces less nitrogen. These are discussed below:

##### Upgrading a sewage treatment system

If your development site is currently served by a septic tank or package treatment plant there may be the opportunity to achieve nutrient neutrality by changing this to a type that is especially effective at reducing nitrogen levels. Systems that both nitrify (i.e. convert ammonia to nitrate) and denitrify (reduce the level of nitrate in the discharge) are especially good, with the best having total nitrogen discharge levels of less than 10mg per litre. The Graf One2Clean is one such example. It may also be possible to fund the replacement of a septic tank or package treatment plant elsewhere in the Lindisfarne catchment in order to achieve nutrient neutrality for your development.

##### Changes in land management

If you manage land that is currently farmed and are able to change its use to woodland, scrub and/or ponds you may be able to achieve nutrient neutrality that way. Research is currently underway concerning the most reliable measures that can be implemented reduce nitrogen runoff from the farmed environment itself and so we hope that a wider range of options will be available for land managers in due course.

If you would like to discuss the potential for achieving nutrient neutrality through upgrades to private sewage treatment plants or changes in land management please contact David Feige, County Ecologist ([david.feige@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:david.feige@northumberland.gov.uk)).

**If you are unable to achieve nutrient neutrality yourself**

Northumberland County Council is working to create a strategic solution in the form of a land management project that will reduce nitrogen levels entering the Lindisfarne SPA/SSSI. Once this has been established, applicants will be able to purchase the requisite number of credits from this project to offset the increase in nitrogen arising from their development. Unfortunately it will inevitably take of some time to establish this; we don't know how long yet, but it will be some months.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Affordable housing:** housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with the definitions set out in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (or as amended).

**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB):** An area with statutory national landscape designation, the primary purpose of which is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

**Asset of Community Value:** A building or land, whose current or recent use furthers the social well-being and interests of the local community. A local authority will maintain a list of buildings and land in its area that is of community value as set out in Section 87 of the Localism Act 2011.

**Basic Conditions:** The statutory tests against which a neighbourhood plan is assessed through independent examination and subsequently by the local planning authority, and which a neighbourhood plan must meet in order to be brought into force. These are set out at paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

**Biodiversity:** The whole variety of life encompassing all genetics, species and ecosystem variations, including plants and animals.

**Community Facilities:** Local services and facilities that benefit the community, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses, open spaces and places of worship.

**Conservation (of heritage assets):** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

**Density (of development):** The amount of building within an area of land. For housing it is normally expressed as the number of dwellings per hectare.

**Designated Heritage Asset:** A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

**Development:** Defined under s.55 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) as 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land.'



**Development Plan:** Defined in s.38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

**European site:** This includes Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, and Special Protection Areas, and is defined in regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

**Environmental report:** The report that documents the outcome of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

**Evidence base:** The information and data gathered by local authorities and used to inform policy development.

**Habitat:** An area or natural environment in which an organism, species or population normally lives. Habitats take many forms and should not be considered in isolation as they are linked and overlap with each other.

**Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA):** The process required in making assessments of the impacts on European sites under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

**Heritage Asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.

**Heritage Coast:** Areas of largely undeveloped coastline which are managed to conserve their natural beauty and, where appropriate, to improve accessibility for visitors. Northumberland's Heritage Coast stretches from Druridge Bay to the Scottish border.

**Historic Environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

**Independent Examination:** The process by which an independent person examines a neighbourhood plan to ensure that it meets the Basic Conditions.

**Infrastructure:** The physical entities (for example roads, railways, sewers, pipes, telecommunications lines) that are necessary for communities to function and move around.

**Landscape Character:** The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.

**Landscape sensitivity:** The ability of the landscape to absorb development, in relation to valued aspects of its character.

**Local Green Space:** A designation equivalent in strength to Green Belt that provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.

**Local Plan:** That part of the development plan prepared by the Local Planning Authority. A local plan comprises planning policies to be used in decision making on development proposals in the area for which the Local Planning Authority has responsibility.

**Material consideration:** Any land-use planning matter that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** The document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

**National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG):** The Government's additional advice to supplement NPPF. This is available only as an online resource and is regularly updated.

**Neighbourhood Plan:** A plan prepared by a parish or town council containing planning policies that form part of the development plan.

**Non-designated heritage assets:** These are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated heritage assets.

**Northumberland County Council:** The unitary authority and Local Planning Authority for Northumberland, other than those areas within the Northumberland National Park.

**Permitted Development:** Certain limited or minor forms of development granted permission by Order of the Secretary of State that may proceed without the need to make an application for planning permission.

**Planning obligation:** (Also known as Section 106 agreements) Legally enforceable obligations attached to land that is the subject of a planning permission which may limit the way in which land is used, or mitigate or compensate for development impact. Planning obligations may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission if they meet the following statutory tests: that they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind.

**Previously Developed Land (PDL) or Brownfield Land:** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

**Rural Exceptions Site:** Small sites used for affordable housing, secured in perpetuity, where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

**Setting of a Heritage Asset:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

**Significance (of heritage assets):** The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

**Special Areas of Conservation:** Areas defined by regulation 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been given special protection as important conservation sites.

**Special Protection Areas:** Areas classified under regulation 15 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest:** Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems):** A sequence of water management practices and facilities designed to drain surface water in a manner that will provide a more sustainable approach than more conventional practices, such as routing run-off through a pipe to a watercourse.

**Sustainable development:** Defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Further, the NPPF states in paragraph 7 that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

**Sustainable transport modes:** Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.